



SCHOOL PROGRAM

ATHLETE STORIES

Maëlle Ricker —
Respect // Grade 4-5

About Maëlle

BORN December 2, 1978

BIRTHPLACE North Vancouver, BC

SPORT Snowboard cross

GAMES Sochi 2014, Vancouver 2010,

Turin 2006, Nagano 1998

FAVOURITE HEALTHY SNACK

Cucumbers

NICKNAME Mighty Mouse



Maëlle Ricker — Respect

A booming voice echoes off the top of Cypress Mountain and rings in Maëlle Ricker's ears.

"Riders ready!" yells the race announcer.

Maëlle grabs the handles of the start gate, bends her knees and gets ready to fly. "You can do this," she says to herself. "This is your story."

"Feeling confident is a huge part of getting ready for a big race."

The race that's about to start is one of the most thrilling races at the Olympic Winter Games – the snowboard cross. Maëlle and three other women are about to race down a winding, twisting course of jumps, rollers and banked turns... at the same time. It's also been a wet sloppy day and the course conditions aren't ideal.

"You have to be safe so you make sure you always wear a helmet and the appropriate equipment. You have to respect the mountain, Mother Nature and your competition. The sport can be dangerous."

Maëlle knows all about that danger first hand. Four years earlier, in Turin, Italy, Maëlle crashed near the top of the race. She had hoped to end that race with a medal, instead she ended it in a hospital with a concussion.

"I made a technical mistake and caught an edge. I crashed on a jump."

There have been crashes and spills during the qualifying runs for today's final as well. Maëlle has fallen on the course more than once already in training and in her first qualifying run. Maëlle knows that riding in traffic is a big part of the attraction of this event, for the competitors and the fans.

"You have to work hard, dedicate yourself and train for it. Each of the racers wants to take the fastest way down the hill. It can actually be fun to jostle around out there, and the fans love it as well. But you have to respect each other in that situation. We have an agreement on the course that we won't cheat, we won't bully someone else just to win."

Cheating could be cutting off another competitor, pushing them or knocking them over. Maëlle knows her competitor's action is a part of the race she can't control, or worry about.

"It's extremely rare that someone would cheat. We are like a family in the snowboarding world. But it happens. You have to just let it wash off your back. You can't retaliate. You want to win by being the best, not by being a bully, even to a bully."

Maëlle feels at her best today.

"Five seconds warning," yells the announcer. Maëlle knows the start is hugely important. If you can get out in front, you have a huge advantage. So she has trained every muscle to shoot her body out of the start gate and into the front of the pack.

"That allows you to set your own race. You pick the line you want to follow down the course. You decide how you want to take a turn or a jump. It's about control, taking control of your race and making your own line down the course."

Maëlle's start is perfect. She bursts into the front. Now it doesn't matter as much what the other boarders do. Maëlle will be the first person into the turns, the first to the jumps, and, if she keeps her body and mind focused and in control, first to the finish line.

"Playing fair is also more fun for everyone. At the end of the race you want the winner to be the best person, the fastest person. That way we also stay friends, not just competitors and you can be happy if you win or if someone else wins fairly."

There's no catching Maëlle this time. She's both fair and fast. She keeps her line, and leads the race from start to finish. The hometown crowd erupts with a cheer.

"I can't describe how happy I felt crossing that finish line."

Winning the race fair and clean just made it even sweeter.



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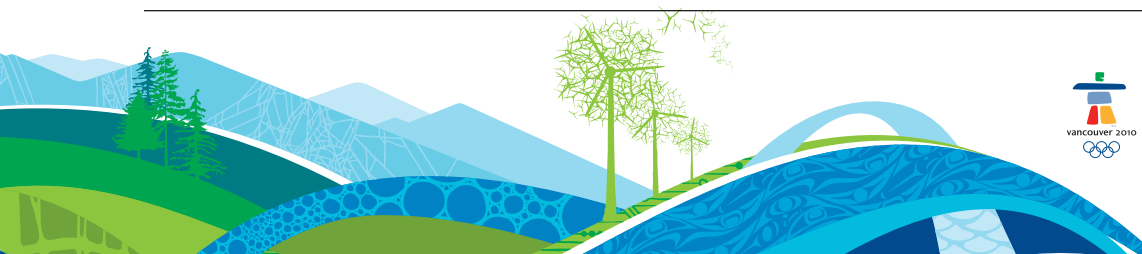
1. In the article, Maëlle explains that respect, fair play and safety are important in a sport like snowboarding. What if you were to create a new game? How would you make sure that the game is safe and that the people playing are respectful and fair?

Create an obstacle course in the box and answer the questions that follow:

What are the rules of the game that make the obstacle course fair and safe?

How can the people playing show sportsmanship during the obstacle course?

What does fair play and sportsmanship look like in the classroom? List 3 examples.



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2. Create a Fair Play Award that will given at the end of the obstacle course. Pick a name for your award and draw it in the box below. Explain how your award will be given out, this is known as the selection criteria.

Fair Play Award Name: _____

The Award:

Selection Criteria:

